



Improvements announced for agriculture irrigation services

The Government of Saskatchewan has announced a series of initiatives that will improve support for the irrigation sector.

Agriculture and Food Minister Mark Wartman said the province will invest \$200,000 dollars in equipment upgrades and repairs at the irrigation research facilities in Outlook over the next few months. The department will also create a new Irrigation Development Branch that better aligns the resources already in place within the department.

“The Saskatchewan Irrigation Projects Association (SIPA), the Action Committee on the Rural Economy (ACRE) and the Saskatchewan Agrivision Corporation have asked us to focus our work in irrigation so we can better capture the opportunities offered by high-value crops and livestock production,” Wartman said. “We begin that long-term effort today by investing in our research facilities and by bringing together the staff and resources needed to chart our path for the future.”

Within the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture and Food, a new Irrigation Development Branch will be responsible for irrigation development, technology transfer and regulatory oversight. The branch will create a link between irrigation and value-added opportunities, including livestock expansion and higher value crops.



“The provincial and federal governments and individual farmers have made significant investments in irrigation over the past 50 years,” Wartman said. “As a result, we now have approximately 340,000 acres under irrigation in Saskatchewan. We will need to continue to grow the industry and develop a critical mass of irrigated acres to fully develop the value-added sector and to increase the value generated from those acres. Government and industry need to take a hard look at what we are doing today and establish what it is that we need to do differently.”

Analysis is already underway to establish the feasibility of expanding the province’s existing infrastructure or creating new irrigation networks. Results of that research are expected before the end of 2006.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Phone the Irrigation Development Branch in Outlook, Sask., at (306) 867-5500;
- Visit www.agr.gov.sk.ca under Crops | Irrigation; or
- Visit the Irrigation Saskatchewan website at www.irrigationsaskatchewan.com.

IRRIGATION CERTIFICATION IN SASKATCHEWAN



Sledded dual EM38 salinity meters with standard base station setup



*By Garth Weiterman, PAg
Senior Agrologist, SAF*

From the first irrigation projects in Saskatchewan in the late 1800s, irrigation development has been a tool for rural development, diversification and crop production stabilization.

Saskatchewan now has over 200,000 acres of intensive irrigation and more than 100,000 acres of controlled spring flood irrigation. The

Province has invested over \$200 million in irrigation infrastructure, not including the main diversion structures located throughout the province. This infrastructure does not focus solely on irrigation, but has led to the development of provincial and regional parks, recreation sites, municipal and commercial water supplies and a host of other uses.

IRRIGATION CERTIFICATE

A person who wishes to irrigate first applies to Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF) to have the land certified for irrigation. SAF determines whether or not the land proposed meets the current certification criteria.

If SAF is satisfied that the certification criteria have been met, an Irrigation Certificate will be issued by SAF’s Agri-Environmental Unit in the Irrigation Development Branch. The department may impose appropriate terms to the Certificate, and the irrigator must comply with these terms.

The Irrigation Certificate may be suspended or cancelled if the holder fails to comply with the terms imposed or if, in the opinion of SAF, it is no longer in the public interest for the land to

continue to be irrigated. A certificate cannot be cancelled before the irrigator has had an opportunity to be heard.

The Irrigation Certificate demonstrates that SAF strives for environmental sustainability of irrigation projects. It protects the province’s water and related land resources, as well as the irrigator’s significant investment in irrigation and related cropping equipment.

Irrigation enhances value-per-unit production-output, bringing higher Gross Domestic Product per acre returns over dryland agriculture. The Agri-Environmental Unit of SAF ensures environmentally sound practices for irrigation development through administration of the Irrigation Certification process.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Call Garth Weiterman in Outlook at (306) 867-5500;
- See the Irrigation Saskatchewan website at www.irrigationsaskatchewan.com; or
- Visit www.agr.gov.sk.ca under Crops | Irrigation | Irrigation.





Province supports development of bio-economy

The Government of Saskatchewan has invested in the province's bio-economy with \$2.5 million in new funding for Ag-West Bio Inc. of Saskatoon.

The mission of Ag-West Bio Inc. is to lead and support the development of an economically viable life sciences cluster in Saskatchewan in a way that will translate into significant economic benefits and spin-offs to the Saskatchewan and Canadian economies. Ag-West Bio Inc. expedites the commercialization of value-added products by linking knowledge and investment with science and enterprise in the development of products that satisfy market needs.

This new investment consists of two parts: \$1.8 million, representing a two-year extension of the existing \$900,000 per year government funding agreement; and \$700,000 for the Ag-West Bio Commercialization Fund.

"This funding will ensure that Ag-West Bio Inc. can continue to support the development of a vibrant bio-economy in Saskatchewan through the development and adoption of new science and technology," Agriculture and Food Minister Mark Wartman said. "The Government of Saskatchewan's investment will facilitate the creation of new bio-products from our high-quality resources, and will strengthen the bio-cluster in Saskatchewan."

The \$1.8 million investment will fund Ag-West Bio's activities in the areas of economic growth and investment, research and development facilitation, regulatory and policy development, communication, education, human resource development and business competitiveness. The remaining \$700,000 will be used by Ag-West Bio for corporate investment, leading to the commercialization of emerging bio-economy opportunities in Saskatchewan.

"The extension to our funding agreement will allow us to continue leading the development of the bio-economy in Saskatchewan," Ag-West Bio's Chair Armand Lavoie said. "The financing for the Commercialization Fund will enable us to continue to invest in early-stage life science companies to further expand the agricultural value-added sector in the province."

Ag-West Bio Inc. was formed in April 2004 through the amalgamation of Ag-West Biotech Inc., Bio-Products Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Nutraceutical Network.

Through the efforts of Ag-West Bio Inc. and its precursors, about 30 per cent of Canada's agricultural biotechnology activity is located in Saskatchewan. A study conducted in 2002 showed that Ag-West Bio Inc. investments have allowed public and private firms to leverage an additional \$52.5 million from other investors, and have indirectly created



approximately 800 jobs. Nearly 500 Saskatchewan-made biotechnology products are currently on the market.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Visit Ag-West Bio's website at www.agwest.sk.ca.

SASKATCHEWAN INVESTS IN AGRICULTURE RESEARCH



Dr. Wilf Keller in the NRC-PBI greenhouse among some of his research plants.

The Government of Saskatchewan has provided \$4.6 million to support two agricultural research projects, on frost tolerance for cereal crops and oilseed diversification, approved by Genome Canada.

"These projects are expected to result in significant long-term benefits to Saskatchewan producers and the provincial economy," Agriculture and Food Minister Mark Wartman said.

"We are assisting important agricultural research that will keep Saskatchewan and Canada in the forefront of agricultural innovation," Wartman said. "Research and innovation are the

foundation upon which long-term change takes place, change that has the potential to transform the agriculture industry and the agricultural economy in Saskatchewan."

Genome Canada, a research funding organization, has received \$600 million from the federal government. When combined with funding from other partners, Genome Canada's funding totals \$1.2 billion for 112 innovative research projects.

The first project has the potential to reduce frost damage, which has accounted for significant economic losses throughout Saskatchewan's history. The second project involves oilseed diversification and specialization, which would lead to increased competitiveness and value for Saskatchewan's oilseed processors, and increased value of meal and feed exported from Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan-based research work for these two projects will be conducted at the University of Saskatchewan and the National Research Council's Plant Biotechnology Institute in Saskatoon. Genome Canada, through Prairie Genome, has an approved budget of \$10.9 million for these projects.

Total cost of the projects is \$25.2 million, which includes support from the Prairie provinces, industry and other investors.

"Saskatchewan-based researchers are leading the way in key crop genomics research projects," Genome Canada President and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Martin Godbout said. "The funding from the Government of Saskatchewan will continue to support excellence in genomics and proteomics research in the province and generate positive economic impact for Saskatchewan."

Genome Prairie President and Chief Executive Officer Jerome Konecni said, "Saskatchewan's investment in genomics is evidence of its commitment to the future of agriculture."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Visit Genome Canada's website at www.genomecanada.ca;
- Visit the NRC's Plant Biotechnology Institute website at <http://pbi-ibp.nrc-cnrc.gc.ca/en/pbi.htm>;
- Visit the College of Agriculture's Plant Science Department and Crop Development Centre website at www.usask.ca/agriculture/plantsci/cspe.html; or
- Visit www.agr.gov.sk.ca under Research.





New Guidelines for Public Participation in Livestock Development



Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF) recently produced a set of guidelines to involve communities in discussions on livestock development. Karen Bolton, the Provincial Livestock Environment Specialist, worked with other members of SAF and with the Dispute Resolution Office of Saskatchewan Justice to prepare a document entitled Guidelines for Public Participation in Livestock Development.

The guidelines are useful for a developer or a community group considering a livestock operation. They are intended to encourage developers to take an active role in engaging the public throughout the development process. Local residents can provide valuable

information on local resources, and highlight issues that may be of concern.

The guidelines are equally useful for a local council that wants to consider various options for collecting public input.

“Development discussions can be difficult, but there is a need to engage the public in this discussion,” said Bolton. “It can be daunting to those who do not have experience in managing public consultation.”

At times, individual developers and community groups can get wrapped up in the details of planning the project and obtaining approvals, and as a consequence, community consultation is initiated late in the process. When consultation happens late in the process, it can result in significant delays, as the public may raise issues that need to be addressed or resolved, which, in some cases, may take time.

“Generally,” she explained, “in the planning world, it is recognized and acknowledged that, although public consultation extends the term of a project, it is useful from a couple of perspectives. One, it often provides local

information and insight that perhaps developers wouldn’t have access to otherwise; and two, it provides people with an opportunity to bring forward their issues. Developers then have a chance to consider those issues and, where possible, to work with the public and the RM to find solutions. This is where the wisdom of these principles lies.” Bolton believes they could be transposed to any project.

“Whether you are looking at livestock development, or any business—an ethanol plant or a seed cleaning plant—the process is the same. You need to consult people and you need to do it in ways that provide an opportunity for them to share their insights and concerns,” she said.

Providing both formal and informal ways for the public to engage in discussions will set the stage for more solution-oriented discussions between developers and the public. The guidelines talk about some of the communications tools that can be used, such as open houses and public meetings, as well as tips for dealing with the media.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact SAF’s Livestock Development Branch at 787-4677; or
- Visit www.agr.gov.sk.ca under Economics and Farm Management | Planning Tools.

IS FEEDING CATTLE AN OPTION?

As agricultural producers weigh the issues surrounding their quest for prosperity, a number of them have been calling SAF Livestock Development Specialist Bill Kowalenko in Outlook to ask him some pretty tough questions.

Kowalenko said he and his colleagues are being approached by producers who are considering seeding their cultivated land to forage crops to provide grazing for beef cattle.

“Some are looking to increase their cow herds; some are new entrants looking to invest in a cattle operation, while others are looking at either providing a custom grazing service or grassing their own cattle.”

Before embarking on any new venture, it is important to do a thorough and detailed analysis to see if it is a viable option.

“The first step in changing a farm operation would be to develop a comprehensive business plan,” he said. “The business plan should include an operational plan, a financial plan, a human resources plan and a marketing plan.”

“Assuming that an operator has determined he or she has the skills and appropriate financing in place, the next most important aspect is

marketing,” said Kowalenko. “Marketing involves making decisions about where to sell, when to sell and what type of product to sell.”

Before any cattle are purchased, Kowalenko recommends a breakeven analysis that would evaluate the purchase and sell decisions, compare different marketing options and reflect the current state of the market and projected market prices.

Another major factor is the cost of livestock feed. Will the feed be grown on the farm or will it be brought in? Yardage and a daily cost per head also need to be calculated and established.

“Yardage is the cost of the facilities and equipment,” explained Kowalenko, “as well as those other costs such as electricity, natural gas, propane or heating fuel, equipment fuel, repairs on facilities and equipment, corral cleaning, hired and operator labour, insurance and interest. Veterinary and medical costs can be included or may be charged out as a separate item.”

Next, he says, a producer needs to carry out a projected breakeven analysis. This step assists in estimating the profit potential and is used to calculate anticipated net returns to the feeding operation.



Before a final price for those finished cattle can be projected, another adjustment needs to be made for the basis.

“The basis is the difference between the local cash price and the nearby futures price,” he explained. “Basis risk refers to how closely the cash price and futures price track. Knowing how to determine this finished market pricing will enable one to evaluate buying decisions that will indicate if there is potential to break even, make a profit or incur a loss.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact SAF’s Livestock Development Branch at (306) 867-5559.





Herd Health and Biosecurity



gates; it just means taking precautionary steps to reduce the risk of disease transfer.

When an animal is brought into your operation, there is potential for it to be carrying a disease or bacteria foreign to your operation. It is imperative to try to minimize the risk of infection and to have a plan in place to deal with an infection should one break out. An example is when you bring an orphan calf onto your farm to replace a lost calf. The calf could be carrying foreign bacteria to which your other calves are

susceptible. Instead of buying an orphan, you might take a calf off an older cull animal and leave it open. Quarantining new animals – or animals that are returning from a show – is another way to reduce the transfer of disease into your herd.

Another central tenet of biosecurity is record-keeping. Many quality assurance programs require record-keeping from their members. Good records are important for traceability

and age verification, and are a useful tool for performance evaluation.

Vaccinations are the foundation of herd health programs. Vaccinations ensure that the animals have proper protection before they come in contact with the pathogen. Vaccination programs often start long before the calf is born. Some vaccines, such as modified live vaccines, need to be administered to the cow before breeding in order to protect both cow and calf. Your veterinarian can help you decide what vaccines are appropriate for your herd. If your animals go into a community pasture, you should consider an intense vaccination program. They will be in contact with animals from outside your herd, and the potential to come in contact with new virus or bacteria is high.

To keep your herd healthy and your production high, it is important to take precautionary steps that reduce the risk on and off the farm.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Call the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377.



by *Christy Winquist*
Beef-Forage Specialist,
Agriculture Knowledge Centre

Biosecurity is a buzz word that is used a lot lately in the livestock industry.

Biosecurity simply means taking steps to ensure no new diseases are being introduced from outside the livestock operation. It does not necessarily mean you need to lock your

GOVERNMENT FUNDS I.T. EQUIPMENT FOR PRAIRIE DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food has provided \$500,000 to Saskatchewan's veterinary diagnostic laboratory, Prairie Diagnostic Services Inc. (PDS), to modernize its information technology infrastructure.

Updated equipment is necessary for the core operation of the laboratory and to support the exchange of information with Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food for animal health surveillance purposes.

"The Government of Saskatchewan wants Saskatchewan's producers and the livestock industry to be served by the best possible technology," Agriculture and Food Minister Mark Wartman said. "The availability of modern, full-service veterinary diagnostic services is essential for Saskatchewan to meet its international obligations in food animal disease surveillance."

"In PDS, our core line of business is delivering high quality and timely diagnostic information to the province, the University and veterinary practitioners, and animal owners across Saskatchewan," PDS Chief

Executive Officer Marilyn Jonas said. "This upgrade to our information system is a critical component needed for delivery of that service and one that is essential to our operations. We appreciate the recognition of this need from the Province and their significant support in providing the solution."

The funding will support a series of initiatives that have been identified in the PDS Information Technology Strategy, including an upgrade of the PDS diagnostic software, the integration and consolidation of the financial software system, the development of e-business web-based client services and the provision of animal health surveillance information to Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food. When complete, these initiatives will not only enhance the ability of PDS employees located



New I.T. equipment at PDS labs in Regina and Saskatoon will help the company pass vital information to its clients faster and more efficiently.

in different centres to communicate with each other, but will also greatly improve the speed and efficiency with which the company can communicate vital information to its clients.

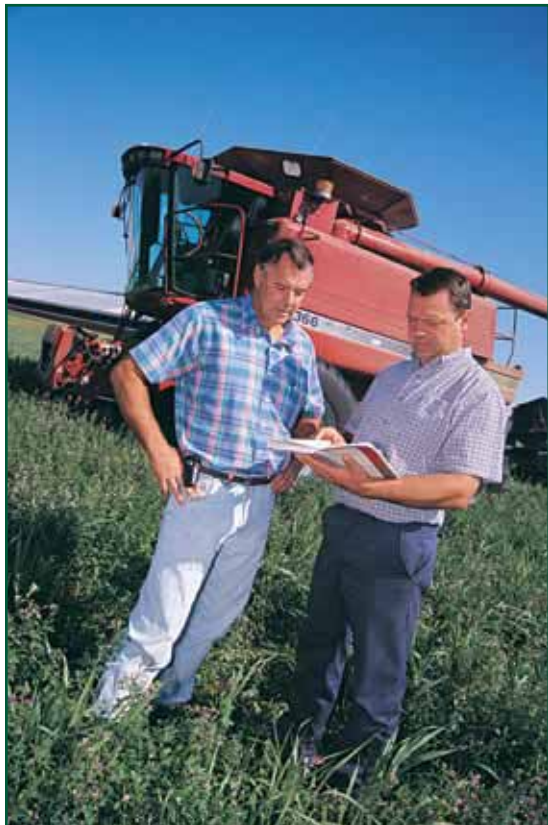
FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Call Marilyn Jonas, Prairie Diagnostic Services, at 966-7248.





Stewardship advisors to help producers implement environmental plans



Environmentally conscious producers will soon have some extra help navigating the Canada-Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Program (CSFSP). In April 2006, the Provincial Council of Agriculture Development and Diversification Boards (PCAB) will deploy six farm stewardship advisors throughout Saskatchewan.

“The advisors will guide producers through the CSFSP application process,” says PCAB Farm Stewardship Co-ordinator Tracy Wickstrom. “As well, they will aid in accelerating the implementation of beneficial management practices (BMPs) on farms by providing the necessary technical support and resources.”

The CSFSP offers cost-shared incentives to assist producers who wish to implement BMPs in their farm operations. Producers can become eligible for funding by: a) completing an environmental farm plan; or b) by taking part in an agri-environmental group planning project. More than 2,500 Saskatchewan farms have completed the EFP process and are eligible to apply for funding under the CSFSP.

“PCAB facilitators already provide assistance for producers who participate in the EFP process,” says Wickstrom. “Now, our farm stewardship advisors will be there as producers take action.”

Producers will be introduced to their local stewardship advisor during the EFP process. Working with an advisor is completely optional.

Advisors will lead qualified producers through the program’s first three steps:

Project Work – Advisors will provide producers with the necessary technical support and resources to ensure that their BMPs are successfully completed.

Application – Advisors will work with producers to create a written description of the project including a site plan (sketch), location, type, and estimated costs.

Approval Process – Advisors will help producers to ensure that they have met any process requirements associated with their program application.

Once all projects have been completed, payment will be made according to the formulas set out by the program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact Tracy Wickstrom, PCAB, at 306-955-5477 ext. 202;
- Contact the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377;
- Visit www.saskpcab.com; or
- Visit www.agr.gov.sk.ca, click on the “Agriculture Policy Framework” badge on the right side of the page, then click Environment.

WHAT IS A BMP?

Recent technological advancements, increased research efforts and greater producer education have led to the accelerated development and adoption of many beneficial management practices (BMPs) across Canada. At the same time, increasing awareness and concern for environmental issues throughout society has generated increased interest and support for agricultural BMPs.

A BMP is any agricultural management practice with the following key characteristics:

- Helps to maintain or improve soil, water and air quality and/or biodiversity;
- Ensures the long-term health and sustainability of land related resources used for agriculture; and
- Is practical, and does not negatively impact the long-term economic viability of producers and others in the agricultural industry.

BUILDING A GREEN AND PROSPEROUS INDUSTRY

Maintaining Saskatchewan’s water, soil, air and biodiversity is an important component of a successful agriculture industry – and a prosperous rural economy. Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food is committed to working with producers to preserve the province’s healthy environment while building a strong, diverse industry.

The following are some of the stewardship initiatives currently undertaken by SAF:

ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN PROGRAM

Involvement by producers in EFP programming will help to increase environmental awareness and provide a process for identifying and addressing environmental issues on farms.

AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP PLANNING

The AEGP initiative provides an opportunity for producers to work together to strategically target a priority agri-environmental issue for their area.

CANADA-SASKATCHEWAN FARM STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM (CSFSP)

The CSFSP provides financial incentives to accelerate adoption of beneficial management practices (BMPs) on farms and agricultural landscapes.

RESPONSIBLE PESTICIDE USE

SAF utilizes an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategy to address environmental concerns and risks associated with pesticide use in agriculture.

MANAGING INTENSIVE LIVESTOCK OPERATIONS (ILOS)

SAF works to ensure protection of surface water and groundwater by regulating new and expanding ILOs and by funding research and conducting various monitoring programs.

AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH

SAF is committed to funding research and development projects that promote the development and diversification of the agriculture and food sectors in Saskatchewan, add value to agricultural products, and develop improved and environmentally sustainable practices.

PRAIRIE CONSERVATION ACTION PLAN

SAF partners with members of other organizations with the common objective of sustaining native prairie in a healthy state in which nature and human values are respected.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Call the Agriculture Knowledge Centre at 1-866-457-2377; or
- Visit www.agr.gov.sk.ca.





DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	PHONE	EMAIL
Mar 27 to 28	The Future of the Swine Industry Conference	Travelodge, Saskatoon	306-373-9922	ken.engele@usask.ca
Mar 29	Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities Clearing the Path Workshop	Travelodge, Melfort	306-761-3733	lfeltin@sarm.ca
Mar 31 to April 1	10th Annual Saskatchewan Elk Breeders Convention & Annual General Meeting	Travelodge, Saskatoon	306-782-6500	seba@sasktel.net
Apr 1	Beginner Shearing School and Wool Workshop	University of Saskatchewan Sheep Barn, Saskatoon	306-933-5200	
Apr 3	Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities Clearing the Path Workshop	Gallager Centre, Yorkton	306-761-3733	lfeltin@sarm.ca
Apr 5	Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities Clearing the Path Workshop	Danceland, Watrous	306-761-3733	lfeltin@sarm.ca
Apr 6	Redvers Ag-Ex and Bull Congress 2006	Redvers Recreation Centre	306-452-3103	rrace@sasktel.net
Apr 7	Annual Trade Show – Long Lake REDA	Watrous Curling Rink	306-946-2223	longlakereda@sasktel.net
Apr 10	The Rural Development Conference 2006 "Community Building through Innovation: Celebrating Today's Rural"	Blue Mountain Resort, Collingwood, Ontario		groupworks@sympatico.ca
Apr 19 to 20	Western Canadian Livestock Expo	Saskatoon Praireland Park	306-931-7149	agmanager@saskatoonex.com
May 1	2006 Saskatchewan Co-operative Merit Awards – deadline for nominations		306-244-3702	warren.crossman@sask.coop.

GOT A QUESTION? WE HAVE THE ANSWER.



The Agriculture Knowledge Centre is your place to start for the latest answers and information, on topics ranging from crops and livestock to nutrient management and the economic implications of farm management decisions. A toll free line, accessible from anywhere in Saskatchewan, puts you in touch with experienced and knowledgeable specialists, who draw on expertise from around the province and beyond. Our friendly staff will help you find the solutions you need for all aspects of your agricultural operation.

8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday
 Phone: 1-866-457-2377 (toll-free); or
 1-306-694-3727
 Fax: 1-306-694-3938
 E-mail: aginfo@agr.gov.sk.ca
 Web: www.agr.gov.sk.ca

AGRICULTURE BUSINESS CENTRES

A team of specialists located at each of the nine ABCs provide advice and support to all types of livestock, crops, forage and value-added processing businesses, and can help you build on opportunities for agriculturally-based economic development in your region.

North Battleford	1-306-446-7964
Outlook	1-306-867-5575
Prince Albert	1-306-953-2363
Regina	1-306-787-9773
Saskatoon	1-306-933-7986
Swift Current	1-306-778-8218
Tisdale	1-306-878-8842
Weyburn	1-306-848-2857
Yorkton	1-306-786-1531

We're waiting for your call.



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